

City of Sparta  
Mayor & Council Meeting  
January 11, 2022 @5pm  
City Council Chambers

Elected Officials present were Mayor Allen Haywood, Mayor ProTem Sandra Sherrod was available by phone due to positive COVID test, Council Members, Brandon Nolley, Tom Roberts and Rav Zuridan Yisrael.

City Clerk, Virginia Webb and City Attorney, John Hitchcock were present.

This meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm by Mayor Allen Haywood due to Mayor ProTem Sherrod's condition, followed by a moment of silence, The Lord's Prayer and The Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Adopt Agenda**

A motion was made by Councilman Roberts to adopt the agenda, Councilman Yisrael seconded the motion. Vote was unanimous.

### **Adopt Minutes**

A motion was made by Councilman Roberts to adopt minutes from the December 14, 2021 regular meeting, seconded by Councilman Yisrael. Vote was unanimous.

A motion was made by Councilman Roberts to adopt minutes from the December 28, 2021, Annual Retail Liquor Sales License meeting, seconded by Councilman Yisrael. Vote was unanimous.

### **Clerk's Report**

A free Health Assessment offered by GMA for all City of Sparta employees has scheduled for January 19, 2022, in the City Council Chambers from 9:30 am to 2:00 pm. A Lifestyle questionnaire, blood pressure check and blood oxygen level will be completed for employees. Employees are asked to schedule an appointment ahead of time by calling City Hall. Walk-ins will be accepted.

W2's will be printed and passed out with payroll on Friday, January 14, 2022.

All of the modules are now serviced by one software company, QS1. We have officially started to use QS1 software for Payroll, Business License, Beer & Wine License, Property Tax, Utility Billing, General Ledger, and Accounts Payables. This has been quite a process due to old systems that were in use here at City Hall. The information extracted had to be reformatted before being converted in preparation for new system. We are happy to announce that the process has been completed even though there were setbacks. This upgrade was necessary to keep up with technology.

The newly elected officials have been scheduled to attend the trainings of their choice with the Carl Vinson Institute of Government. The trainings will last for 3 days and will cost \$420 per person. The trainings are held in Athens and in Tifton. Reservations have been made at nearby hotels and packages will be ready for pickup by Friday, January 21, by each councilmember.

The Property Tax deadline was December 31, 2021. Interest has been added to accounts and interest will continue to accrue until paid.

### **Mayor's Report**

The ARPA guidelines were released from the federal government on Thursday, January 6, 2022.

We have addressed issues in which the EPA did an inspection at the Wastewater Facility. There were 3 findings. One of the findings included cleaning out the Lagoons at the plant. We intend to seek funds from the infrastructure grant, which has an estimated cost of over \$400,000 to clean each of the 3 lagoons, located at the facility.

The City of Sparta has received a bill from the Hancock County Board of Commissioners in the amount of \$16,023.30, which is the share that the city is responsible for paying. The entire amount was paid by the Board of Commissioners to the contractor approved by the Department of Transportation. This amount was paid for storm repair damage from 2009 and 2014 to cover damage on streets within the city limits. A contract was agreed to, by the administration for the City of Sparta, but was never paid by the previous administration. The amount had been requested several times.

We have repaired the gate at the Water Filter Plant. The cost was \$7,995, paid to Garrett Fence Company. The property must be secured, which is a requirement by the Department of Homeland Security.

Natural Gas rates will fluctuate each month, according to the Municipal Gas Authority of Georgia. In October 2021 the rates were \$15.37, and in January 2022 the rates are \$11.73. These rates are set and managed by the Public Service Commission.

Hurricane Irma Grant Fund has been completed, and we can expect to receive the funds to repair the roof on the Sparta Police Department on Broad Street.

We have been notified that the prices for water treatment chemicals at the Water Filter Plant have increased dramatically, therefore the City of Sparta water customers may see an increase in the water bills if the water department expenses exceed budget. Some of the chemicals used to treat the water, after it has been pumped to the plant, are chlorine, alum and soda ash. Some of these chemicals will increase in price as much as 43.8%. The water rate are being recalculated to cover the cost to treat and deliver water to each customer.

## **Old Business**

### **A. Report on Software Conversion**

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### **B. Occupation & Business License Ordinance Report**

There will be a work session to address these fees, on January 27, 2022 @ 4:30 pm in the City Council Chambers at City Hall.

## **New Business**

#### A. Approval of Purchase of Portable Pump for Sewer System

A portable pump is needed for emergency use by the City, due to many of the stations having only one pump. If a pump goes down, our only option at this point is to get a rental pump until our pump can be rebuilt or replaced. The cost for a rental is about \$5,000 per week. The last pump rental cost the City more than \$25,000. Of the 14 lift stations that have space for 2 pumps, only 4 stations actually have 2 working pumps. Unlike water, after being treated, it is pumped into the water tank, and will freely flow to our customers. Sewer has to be pumped 24 hours a day, 7 days per week or it will back up. The cost of a new pump is about \$50,000, while the cost of a used pump is about \$30,000. The used pump will be serviced before being purchased. Councilman Roberts motioned to purchase the used pump for the Wastewater Facility for the sewer system, Councilman Yisrael seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

#### B. Approval of 5 Years' Renewal Contract with CSRA Probation Services

The State of Georgia mandates that we provide probationary services and these fees are passed on to the defendants. Councilman Yisrael motioned to approve the contract, Councilman Nolley seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

### **Announcements**

Mayor & Council Work Session at 4:00pm Thursday, January 27, 2022 to Address Occupation & Business License (note: This Work Session was cancelled).

Mayor & Council Work Session at 4:30pm Thursday, February 3, 2022 to replace regular February Work Session

Public Hearing for Occupation & Business License Ordinance at 5pm on Thursday, February 3, 2022 (note: This meeting/hearing was cancelled).

Mayor & Council Regular Meeting at 5pm Tuesday, February 8, 2022

City Hall will be closed Monday, January 17, 2022, in Observance of MLK Memorial Day

Historic Preservation Commission Regular Meeting 5:30 pm, Thursday, January 13, 2022 in City Hall

### **Citizens' Input**

Natasha Walker, lives in the city, at 150 Walker Street has concerns about the business license fee.

Nathan Dardy, owns a business in the city, on Spring Street has concerns about a road closure sign placed near his business. It was explained that due to drainage issues, repairs must be completed before it can be reopened. The road is closed for safety reasons.

Markesha Brown, resides and owns a business in the city, has questions about which cities have we compared our fees for business license/occupation tax with. Also, is there a list of people that were assisted with utilities or repairs that can be obtained from Overview.

Calandria Leslie, lives in the city, on Powelton Avenue, has concerns about business license.

Aketia Mayweather, lives in the city, has concerns about the ARPA funds that were received by the city and that they were for people of color. The Mayor responded that there is no mention of skin color, only income/poverty levels, in the final guidelines prepared by the U.S. Treasury and released a few days ago.

Burnestine Strother, lives in the county, has concerns about the funds that were given to Overview by the City of Sparta to help citizens with past due utilities.

Paula Dixon, lives in the county, had concerns that Overview had not administered funds fairly.

Councilman Roberts motioned to enter into executive session and it was seconded by Councilman Yisrael. The vote was unanimous.

### **Executive Session**

No items discussed in executive session required a vote.

Councilman Roberts motioned to return to regular session and it was seconded by Councilman Yisrael. The vote was unanimous.

### **Adjourn meeting**

Councilman Roberts motioned to adjourn meeting and it was seconded by Councilman Nolley. The vote was unanimous.